Big ships at Indian ports

4699. SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian ports are unable to handle big ships;

(b) if so, whether the big ships carrying goods to India are being diverted to the neighbouring country, Sri Lanka resulting loss of revenue;

(c) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto; and

(d) the steps taken by the Union Government to develop Indian ports to handle big ships?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Depending on the depths available in the entrance channels and berths, and the availability of equipment, vessels of various sizes are handled at Indian Ports.

(b) A small portion of container traffic bound for destinations in India gets trans-shipped in Colombo Port in Sri Lanka.

(c) and (d) The ability of a port to attract large size vessels and to handle them depends on various factors which include the traffic volumes, proximity to international routes and markets, good road/rail connectivity, large backup area and supporting hinterland. It is the endeavour of the Government to develop the necessary port infrastructure for attracting and handling such vessels, keeping in view the demands of maritime trade, as part of the overall development of ports. Under the National Maritime Development Programme (NMDP) formulated by the Department of Shipping, 276 projects involving an investment of Rs. 55,804 crores in the 12 Major Ports have been identified to be taken up for implementation over a period upto 2011-12. These include 25 projects for deepening of port channels, 76 projects for construction/reconstruction of berths/jetties etc., 52 projects for procurement of equipment etc., 45 projects for improvement in rail/road connectivity to the Major Ports and 78 other associated projects. The objective is to upgrade and modernise the port infrastructure in India which will enable it to benchmark its performance against global standards.